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ABSTRACT

To discover what basis may exist for criticism of colleges for poor student writing, and to answer several related questions, a study of the writing of Yale College freshmen was undertaken in the spring of 1976. One hundred and seventy-three students participated voluntarily. Four kinds of information were collected: (1) ratings of an essay according to six categories of writing; (2) student responses on a questionnaire about past writing experience, current courses, Yale courses that had helped them, and future English course plans; (3) grades in freshman English courses; and (4) precollege test scores on the English Composition Achievement Test, Schclastic Aptitude Test-Verbal, and the Test of Standard Written English. Bases for selecting students to participate in the study were: whether or not the student had taken a freshman English course, SAT-V level; and sex. Essays were read by graduate-level English students and a faculty member. It was found that: complaints about student writing are in general not justified; about 20 percent of the students may need a freshman English course; low scores on standardized tests are an indication of the need to take a freshman English course, but alert teachers are important as well; and one particular Yale course produced student writers whose scores in the study were highly consistent with their course grades. (MSE)

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YALE COLLEGE FRESHMEN:

HOW WELL DO THEY WRITE?

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INTRODUCTION

Laments about the quality of student writing are perennial in American education. The current uproar over "the literacy crisis" is not novel; but it may reflect a newly acute phase of a chronic problem. Even the most selective colleges - even Yale College - have come under fire for failing to teach their students to write well. The most persuasive fulminations have often come from within the College; even the apathetic and the skeptical are becoming a little uneasy about student writing - maybe apocalyptic pronouncements of the coming demise of literacy have some basis. To discover what basis they may have, and to answer several related questions about student writing, we undertook in the spring of 1976 a study of essays written by Yale College freshmen. Our questions were of two sorts: questions of fact, to which the statistical analysis of data provides fairly straightforward answers; and questions related to educational policy, which we believe can be answered more wisely once the matters of fact are clear.

Questions of Fact

1. Can trained readers agree on the quality of student writing? Do they agree better about some aspects than about others?

2. Do the Yale freshmen who take English courses write better essays than those who do not take English courses? Do these two groups differ in pre-college test scores? In other ways?

3. How do pre-college measures, including selection tests (English Composition Achievement Test, Scholastic Aptitude Test - Verbal, Scholastic Aptitude Test - Math) and the new experimental placement test (Test of Standard Written English) relate to Yale freshman essay ratings and to

grades in English courses?

4. Are there differences in essay ratings and in grades in English courses between men and women in our sample group?

5. How frequently have freshmen written essays in secondary school compared to their first year in college? Does the frequency of their writing relate to essay ratings or English grades?

6. What courses do students find most helpful for improving their writing? Do they believe that other students would use a writing consultant? Would they use one?

7. What kinds of English courses do this year's freshmen plan to take next year? Of those who have had no English course freshman year, how many expect to take such a course next year?

Questions Related to Educational Policy:

1. Are complaints about the quality of student writing at Yale justified? What are the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing?

2. What proportion of freshmen seem likely to profit from a basic composition course? Do these students always or often elect an English course in freshman year?

3. What are the most accurate and efficient ways to identify students who need a basic composition course when they enter college? Can the Yale English department rely on standardized tests for placement or should it also administer an essay test of its own?

4. Should freshmen be required to take an English course? A writing course?

5. Could our experience in developing ways to evaluate the essays provide useful techniques for training new teachers? For improving the teaching of writing?

CONDUCT OF THE STUDY

Information Collected

We have looked at the following information for each of 173 Yale College freshmen: (1) ratings of an essay on 6 different categories of writing; (2) responses of the student to a questionnaire about past writing experience, current courses, Yale courses that have helped his or her writing, and future English course plans; (3) grades in freshman English courses (English 15, English 25, English 29, average for fall, spring, and total year); and (4) pre-college test scores on English Composition Achievement Test (Eng Comp), Scholastic Aptitude Test-Verbal (SAT-V), Scholastic Aptitude Test-Math (SAT-M), and the Test of Standard Written English (TSWE).[1] Our bases for selecting students to participate in the study were three other major variables: (5) Did the student take a freshman English course?; (6) SAT-V level; and (7) sex.

Additional information that could be used to examine questions about student writing not discussed in this report also has been collected for

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[1]The TSWE, a test developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) for the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), has been administered nationally on an experimental basis for the past two academic years. The major purpose of the test is to assist in the appropriate placement of college freshmen in English composition courses. The test concentrates on problem areas in the use of conventional standard written English, but does not include capitalization, punctuation, or the formal terminology of grammar. ETS has prepared "A Preliminary Study of the Test of Standard Written English" (by Hunter Breland, Gertrude Conlon, and David Rogosa, Princeton, N. J.: Educational Testing Service, March, 1976), and a second report is expected in early 1977. The preliminary study looks at fall English grades and pre-college measures from twelve diverse colleges; it also considers a variety of other information including essays written at the most "selective" (in terms of matriculant/applicant ratio) college of the twelve. Although the colleges in the ETS study all have considerably lower average TSWE scores and much wider score distributions than Yale, their report serves as a useful reference.

participants. Appendix A lists the total set of data available.

Student Sample

We initially divided the freshman class (Class of 1979) into twelve groups based on the three selection variables:

Figure 1

Twelve Selection Groups

SAT-V Level	Fall English Course		No Fall English Course	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Under 640				
640-690				
Over 690				

The SAT-V Level ranges were selected to divide the class's SAT-V scores into as even thirds as possible. The top level cut-off point of 690 also coincides with current English department guidelines for placement of freshmen into advanced courses. We should emphasize that our low level of "under 640" would be considered high for many other colleges, and therefore the 3-level breakdown would not apply to most schools. Table 1 gives the total numbers and percentages of students in the entire freshman class who fit in each of the twelve groups.

We sent letters inviting participation in the study to 300 freshmen, 25 students in each of the 12 groups. (See Appendix B for copy of letter.) Our original goal was to collect writing samples from a total of 240 students, 20 per group. After three large writing sessions, several

Table 1

Distribution of Total Freshman Class

SAT-V Level	Fall English Course				No Fall English Course			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Under 640	240	34.7	121	28.0	43	30.7	31	35.6
640-690	209	30.3	114	26.4	43	30.7	27	31.0
Over 690	206	29.8	181	41.9	43	30.7	25	28.8
No SAT-V	36	5.2	16	3.7	11	7.9	4	4.6
Total	691	100.0	432	100.0	140	100.0	87	100.0

telephone calls, and a few individual writing sessions, we were able to obtain the participation of 191 students, 63.6% of those originally invited. The residential college Deans gave valuable support to our efforts. The numbers and percentages of participants from each group are shown in Table 2. Men with low SAT-V scores were the most difficult groups to attract.

Table 2

Student Participation in Writing Essays

SAT-V Level	Fall English Course				No Fall English Course			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Under 640	11	55	18	90	12	60	17	85
640-690	17	85	16	80	16	80	17	85
Over 690	15	75	20	100	15	75	17	85

For ease of statistical analysis, we randomly selected 15 essays from the 10 larger groups, and included the 12 and 11 essays available from the two men's low SAT-V groups. Readers used the extra essays to develop guidelines and categories for evaluating the essays.

We later learned that 7 of the students originally selected in the "No Fall English Course" groups actually had taken one of the basic English courses (English 15, 25 or 29) during the fall or spring semester. After moving these students over to the "English course" side, we finally had the following distribution of 173 essays for evaluation by readers (Table 3).[1]

Table 3

Distribution of Rated Essays

SAT-V Level	English Course		No English Course	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Under 640	13	15	10	15
640-690	15	16	15	14
Over 640	15	18	15	12

The Writing Session

We opened each session by reviewing the purposes of the study, which also had been clearly explained in the invitation letter. Students were asked to answer a few questions about their writing experience and plans for future English courses. (See Table 15 for copy of questionnaire.) After the questionnaires were completed, bluebooks and the essay instructions printed below were distributed. Students were given 40 minutes to

[1] Statistical analyses computed in the study do not require perfectly even numbers in each group.

complete their essays; time was indicated at 10-minute intervals.

* * * * *

Essay Writing Instructions

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING "TOPICS" TO WRITE ABOUT. YOU MAY AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT, OR YOU MAY DISAGREE; IN EITHER CASE, MAKE THE BEST ARGUMENT YOU CAN FOR THE POSITION YOU TAKE.

Topic A
Here's another lesson in hypocrisy: the Jews keep reminding us of the Nazi holocaust, to get themselves international sympathy--while they practice their own atrocities against the Palestinians.

Topic B
A woman isn't really liberated unless she can take sex casually and naturally, without asking whether it's "meaningful" any more than she asks whether it's legal.

Topic C
Everybody blames TV for something--from the crime rate to why Johnny can't read. But in fact television deals seriously with serious issues. And many of the weekday shows are really good, by any cultural standards you want to apply.

Topic D
A Marxist, proposing a seminar on a Black leader? No wonder the Yale history department refused to appoint Herbert Aptheker!

Topic E
The corruption and sensationalism of professional sports in America have made athletics look so bad that now it's almost a disgrace to play a sport well.

* * * * *

Essay topics. Each student was asked to write on one of the 5 possible essay questions. These topics, listed above, were selected to offer students a choice of familiar and engaging topics that would require the writer to take a position and to provide supporting arguments. For the 173 students whose essays were evaluated, 19 chose Topic A, 65 - Topic B, 52 - Topic C, 12 - Topic D, and 22 - Topic E. Three preferred to write on a topic of their own choice.

Rating the Essays

Readers. Our readers included four (paid) graduate students and one experienced member of the English faculty, who also is co-author of this paper. All the students had been in graduate school for 3 or more years and all had taught English at the college or high school level (or both).

Developing rating categories. The readers met together three times. Our first session was devoted to developing the rating categories; at the second session reading instructions were reviewed and essays assigned; and the third session was a debriefing session. A few days before the initial meeting each reader was given a set of 10 training essays, including one or more on each topic. The readers were instructed to read each essay, evaluate its quality on a 5-point scale, and then list the considerations that had contributed to their evaluation.

Before considering specific essays and categories, we reviewed the purposes of the study and suggested the following goals for development of the rating categories: (a) Limit categories to a small number (3 to 6); (b) Select relatively distinct categories, since these would decrease "halo effect" in rating and would add more information than would overlapping categories; (c) Define the categories clearly, and provide low, middle, and high anchors for them; (d) Frame of reference for the ratings should be this set of 173 essays written by Yale College freshmen in 40 minutes.

During the first meeting, the readers went through the 10 initial training essays one by one, giving their ratings and then listing on the blackboard those considerations that had influenced their evaluations. After this procedure and much discussion, we agreed upon the 6 categories

described below in the "Instructions for Readers."[1]

At the second meeting, readers reviewed the "Instructions for Readers" and "Readers' Guidelines" (See Appendix C) and then rated 3 training essays. We discussed these ratings to clarify category definitions and reading procedures. Readers took their entire sets of essays home for four days rated them, and returned them to the English department. After preliminary analyses of the ratings, a final debriefing session was held where we discussed readers' reactions to the experience and their actual use of the categories.

* * * * *

Instructions for Readers

In evaluating the essays, we will use the five-point scale and six categories that we have agreed upon. The frame of reference for evaluation is this set of essays, not an external standard of excellence. The five points of the scale have therefore these meanings:

5 one of the best
4 better than average
3 average for this set of essays
2 poorer than average
1 one of the poorest

---

[1]Although our rating categories were developed without direct reference to prior compilations, they do include many of the aspects frequently considered important in the evaluation of writing. These categories also relate closely to five clusters of rating emphases identified in an earlier empirical study by Paul Diederich, John French, and Sydell Carlton ("Factors in Judgments of Writing Ability," Research Bulletin RB-61-15, Princeton, N. J.: Educational Testing Service, 1961). That study asked 60 "distinguished readers" in six occupational fields to rate 300 freshman essays "in order of general merit, using their own ideas of what constitutes general merit" (p.6). Five clusters of readers were identified, each of whom emphasized a particular aspect when evaluating an essay's overall quality: (1) the ideas expressed--their richness, soundness, clarity, development, and relevance to the topic and the writer's purpose; (2) usage, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling; (3) organization and analysis; (4) wording and phrasing style; and (5) personal flavor.

Make a point of using the entire scale, especially for the first five categories.

Categories for Evaluation

Mechanics

1. Sub-sentence level
   - Are spelling and punctuation correct
   - Are idiomatic phrases correctly formed
   - Is vocabulary accurate
2. Sentences
   - Are sentences grammatical
   - Do complex sentences show a control of meaning and syntax (is the end of the sentence foreseen from the beginning)
   - Does the writer attempt sophisticated structures
3. Organization
   - Does the essay have a clear beginning, middle, and end
   - Do paragraph divisions correspond with subtopics
   - Does the writer avoid empty reiteration
   - Do paragraphs have topic sentences
4. Thought
   - Does the essay directly address (or explicitly redefine) its topic
   - Is the discourse logically consistent and coherent
   - Does the argument carry authority, through the use of evidence and supporting reasons
   - Does the writer avoid and/or treat critically clichés, assertions, generalizations
5. Style
   - Is diction controlled, consistent, decorous, felicitous
   - Are such techniques as parallelism, reiteration, irony, humor, variation used to advantage
   - Does the writer imply a clear, consistent definition of audience
   - Does he create a recognizable individual voice
6. Essay as a whole

* * * * *

Rating procedures. The 173 essays selected for rating and the 10 training essays were typed verbatim, preserving all errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and so forth, but omitting any parts marked out by the writers. Students' paragraph indentations were followed. Essays were randomly assigned numbers for the purpose of recording, and any indications of a writer's identity or selection group were omitted.

Each of the 4 graduate student readers rated a total of 116 or 117 essays (including 12 essays that were repeated in the middle of their sets as a reliability check). The faculty person rated all 173 essays once and repeated 12. Two of the students read the essays in reverse order of the other readers to balance a possible order effect. To test inter-rater agreement, 36 of the 173 essays were read by all 5 readers. For the remaining 137 essays, each was read by two students in a balanced assignment pattern that paired every combination of readers an equal number of times for each of the 12 selection groups. Adding the faculty reader, this resulted in 3 readers per essay.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Questions of Fact

1. Can trained readers agree on the quality of student writing? Do they agree better about some aspects than about others?

Inter-rater and intra-rater agreement. Ratings of the 36 essays read by all readers were examined to determine inter-rater reliability estimates. Correlations among the 5 raters are given for each of the categories in Table 4. Because of their relatively low correlations with other readers, we removed Reader 2 from final computation of overall ratings and Reader 5 from the Organization and Thought categories. The table gives adjusted reliability coefficients for each category, using the Spearman-Brown method for projecting reliabilities of ratings averaged across several readers. Projected reliabilities of the final category average ratings ranged from .61 to .83 with a median of .68.

Table 4

Inter-rater Correlations and Adjusted Reliability Coefficients

Readers	Subsentence Category					Sentence Category				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	1.00	.43	.59	.55	.52	1.00	.46	.43	.52	.29
2		1.00	.44	.47	.39		1.00	.40	.45	.42
3			1.00	.34	.52			1.00	.50	.55
4				1.00	.62				1.00	.49
5					1.00					1.00
	Adjusted Reliability = .83					Adjusted Reliability = .81				
	Organization Category					Thought Category				
1	1.00	.25	.41	.36	-.21	1.00	-.10	.43	.33	-.07
2		1.00	.49	.26	.06		1.00	.50	.15	.02
3			1.00	.25	.03			1.00	.33	.19
4				1.00	.28				1.00	.14
5					1.00					1.00
	Adjusted Reliability = .64					Adjusted Reliability = .66				
	Style Category					Overall Category				
1	1.00	.45	.33	.41	.29	1.00	.11	.38	.32	.00
2		1.00	.25	.30	.39		1.00	.24	-.05	.03
3			1.00	.17	.51			1.00	.28	.48
4				1.00	.30				1.00	.29
5					1.00					1.00
	Adjusted Reliability = .70					Adjusted Reliability = .61				

Correlations computed for the 12 essays that each reader repeated are: Subsentence=.79,Sentence=.74,Organization=.69, Thought=.63,Style=.82,Overall=.77.

Adjusting for other inter-rater differences. Comparisons among readers on each category show that they used the rating levels in significantly different ways. Some gave a wider range of ratings than others, and some consistently assigned higher ratings. To give equal influence to all of the raters, we standardized their ratings so that the average rating for each reader on every category is a 3 and one standard deviation is 1 point on the scale. This puts about two-thirds of a reader's essays between a rating of 2 and 4, with the more extreme essays given ratings closer to 1 or 5.

Computing the average category ratings. Average standardized category ratings are used for all remaining analyses. The 6 category ratings were computed for each of the 173 essays by averaging the standardized ratings of all readers who read an essay (excluding Reader 5 for Organization and Thought and Reader 2 for Overall Rating). This results in 36 essays based on ratings by all readers for 3 categories and by four readers on the other 3. The remaining 137 essays are based on three readers for 3 categories and on two or three (depending on whether Reader 2 read an essay) for the remaining 3.

Inter-category relationships. Table 5 gives correlations among the 6 categories, based on the averaged ratings. These correlations indicate that the categories are highly interrelated, but their differential relationships with external variables distinguishes them from each other. Lowest correlations appear between Subsentence and Organization, and between Subsentence and Thought.

Table 5

Inter-category Correlations

	Subsentence	Sentence	Organization	Thought	Style	Overall
Subsentence	1.00	.84	.58	.57	.78	.74
Sentence		1.00	.70	.66	.85	.84
Organization			1.00	.83	.75	.76
Thought				1.00	.77	.76
Style					1.00	.87
Overall						1.00

2. Do the Yale freshmen who take English courses write better essays than those who do not take English courses? Do these two groups differ in pre-college test scores? In other ways?

Pre-college test-scores. As a first step in selecting our student sample, we compared all freshman students who did and did not take a fall English course. Differences for three major pre-college tests are shown in Table 6; none are significantly different.

Essay ratings. When essay ratings of the 92 students in our sample who took a freshman English course are compared with the 81 who did not, no statistically significant differences are found. Average ratings and standard deviations for the two groups are given in Table 7 for each category.

Table 6

Course/No Course Comparisons
on Pre-College Tests for Total Freshman Class[1]

	Fall English Course		No Fall English Course		t-test
	Average Score	Number Students	Average Score	Number Students	t-test Comparison
SAT-Verbal	65.32	1071	64.92	212	.63
SAT-Math	67.08	1070	67.76	212	1.13
Eng Comp	65.05	894	65.46	191	.60

Note: None of the t-tests are statistically significant at $P \leq .10$.

Table 7

Course/No Course Comparisons
on 6 Essay Rating Categories

	English Course		No English Course		
Categories	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	F-test Comparison[2]
Subsentence	3.03	.80	2.93	.88	.47
Sentence	3.07	.80	2.90	.89	1.68
Organization	2.99	.79	2.94	1.00	.12
Thought	3.02	.81	2.94	.83	.24
Style	3.07	.74	2.93	.83	1.34
Overall	3.06	.79	2.91	.90	1.43

Note: None of the F-tests are statistically significant at $P \leq .10$.

[1]Not all students have SAT and Eng Comp scores. 95% of the Class of 1979 have recorded SAT tests; 80% have Eng Comp tests. This count and all statistical comparisons are based on the students in the class whose admissions records are on the ADMC79 file. It may vary a few students from those who actually matriculated and it omits a few students who were admitted with earlier classes.

[2]Results of 3-way Analysis of Variance for essay ratings and English grades are available from the authors.

Other information. Students with and without an English course also were compared on a number of additional variables listed in Appendix A. One of the few differences on pre-college information that we found is that students without English report a higher percentage of advanced placement courses in math (28% of the no-course students vs. 16% with course, $p<.10$). As expected, students without English were enrolled in significantly more Division IV--science and mathematics--courses ($p<.05$). About twice as many freshmen without English were "intensive science students"(taking three or more Division IV courses)compared with those taking freshman English courses.

3. How do pre-college measures, including selection tests (English Composition Achievement Test, Scholastic Aptitude Test-Verbal, Scholastic Aptitude Test-Math) and the new experimental placement test (Test of Standard Written English) relate to Yale freshman essay ratings and to grades in English courses?

Essay ratings and SAT-V level. Students were evenly sampled from the three SAT-V levels in order to compare their essays statistically. As would be expected, students from the three levels (low, middle, and high) have significantly different ratings on each of the essay categories ($p<.001$). Average ratings for the levels are given in Table 8.

Table 8

SAT-V Level Comparisons on the 6 Essay Rating Categories

	Low--Under 640		Middle--640-690		High--Over 690		
Categories	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	F-test Comparison
Subsentence	2.57	.77	3.01	.80	3.32	.77	13.96***
Sentence	2.55	.69	2.94	.85	3.42	.78	17.66***
Organization	2.55	.79	2.88	.84	3.42	.83	15.61***
Thought	2.69	.70	2.84	.84	3.37	.74	7.31***
Style	2.61	.67	2.93	.76	3.41	.72	17.53***
Overall	2.57	.75	2.93	.87	3.42	.68	10.50***

***=p<.001

Distribution of TSWE scores. ETS emphasizes that the TSWE is designed to serve as a placement tool, not as a selection test (Breland, Conlon, & Rogosa, 1976). The test was developed originally for schools where substantial proportions of students are likely to need some remedial work in English. Table 9 illustrates that large proportions of the Yale freshmen received the two highest scores possible (60+ = 38.3%, 59 = 13.9%). The original purpose of the TSWE and the extreme skewing of Yale's TSWE scores makes it surprising that fairly strong relationships are still found for the Yale freshmen between TSWE and the essay ratings and freshman English grades. Even when we exclude those students whose primary language is not English, correlations with TSWE remain moderately high. (See the authors for two correlation matrices of all pre-college and freshman year data discussed in this report. One table gives correlations for all students, the other for all but those for whom English is not the primary language.)

Table 9

Distribution of TSWE Scores

TSWE Score	Number of Students	Percentage of Students with TSWE
60+	44	38.3
59	16	13.9
58	9	7.8
57	11	9.6
56	4	3.5
55	8	7.0
54	6	5.2
53	5	4.3
52	1	0.9
51	1	0.9
50	2	1.7
49	2	1.7
48	3	2.6
47	2	1.7
33	1	0.9
(no TSWE)	(58)	---

Essay ratings and four pre-college scores. Correlations of the 4 pre-college test scores (TSWE, Eng Comp, SAT-V, and SAT-M) with the 6 essay ratings are given in Table 10. TSWE correlates best of the 4 pre-college tests with the two ratings of writing basics--subsentence level and sentence level mechanics (r = .51 for each). This correlation level is almost identical to the correlation of .52 found by ETS between TSWE and rating of essays on "grammar, usage, and sentence sense." The ETS figure was based on ratings of essays written by 96 freshmen at the most selective (in terms of matriculant/applicant ratio) of twelve colleges in a special 20-minute spring semester test (Breland, Conlon, & Rogosa, 1976). It is interesting that the ETS essay topic was similar to our frequently chosen essay question--the one about television:

> We constantly hear that television is a bad influence on our lives. We hear that it teaches people to be violent and to commit crimes. We hear that it tempts people to stay 'glued to the boob tube' instead of talking to each other or reading. In short, in one way or another, television seems to be blamed for all that is bad in our lives. Yet, most of us watch television and undoubtedly see some good in it.
>
> What good do you see in television? Choose one or two ways in which you think that television is of benefit to individuals, to families, or even to all of society. Tell exactly what you consider the benefits of television to be and tell how television works to improve or to help people. Use specific examples to support your ideas.
>
> You are expected to express your thoughts carefully, naturally, and effectively. Be specific. Remember that how well you write is much more important than how much you write.

English Composition test and TSWE correlate much better than other measures with the two ratings of mechanics. The two tests correlate nearly the same with the sentence category (r = .51, .52); TSWE correlates slightly higher on the subsentence category (r = .51, .46). For the remaining 4 categories, TSWE, Eng Comp, and SAT-V have similar relationships.

Table 10

Correlations between Essay Ratings and Pre-College Scores

	TSWE	Eng Comp	SAT-V	SAT-M	High School Grade Average
Subsentence	.51***	.46***	.38***	.13*	.20*
Sentence	.51***	.52***	.42***	.23***	.22*
Organization	.33***	.39***	.36***	.22**	.19*
Thought	.32***	.30***	.29***	.13[a]	.19*
Style	.45***	.52***	.42***	.24***	.27**
Overall	.43***	.45***	.40***	.22**	.20*

Note: *** = $p \leq .001$, ** = $p \leq .01$, * = $p \leq .05$, a = $p \leq .10$

SAT-M correlations are, of course, considerably lower than for the other pre-college measures.

The frequency counts in Table 11 illustrate that those students who receive low scores on the TSWE consistently were rated below average (3.00) on the 6 essay categories. However, a maximum TSWE score of "60+" is no guarantee of high essay rating. It should be repeated that the Yale Freshmen's TSWE scores are much higher than those at any of the 12 diverse colleges in the ETS preliminary study. Even the lowest 10% of Yale scores (omitting one foreign student score of 33) would fall in the top 50% for the 12 ETS schools.

In Table 11, we underlined students for whom English is not the primary language. It is evident that these students are many of those scoring low on TSWE and that their grades and essay ratings are similarly low.

Essay ratings and other pre-college information. The correlations between test scores and high school grade average (self-reported by

Table 11
Tally of Ratings for Freshmen in Four TSWE Levels *

TSWE Levels	(n)	Essay Ratings: 1.2	1.4	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.4	4.6	4.8	5.0+
							SUBSENTENCE RATING														
60+	(44)			1	1	2	1	2	3	1	9	2	2	2	2	7	6	1	1		1
56-59	(40)	1		2		1	3	1	4	2	3	7	7	4	1	3	1				
51-55	(21)	1 2	1			1	2	2	3	3	1 1		1 2		1						
33-50	(10)	2 1			1	1	1	1	1		1	1									
							SENTENCE RATING														
60+	(44)	1			1	1	2	3	2	1	3	7	3	6	2	7		2	1	2	
56-59	(40)			1	4		1	1	3	4	5	8	2	4	6	1					
51-55	(21)	1	1	1	2 1	1 1	1	1 1 1	2	3		1	1	1	1						
33-50	(10)	1		2	2			2	1	1			1								
							ORGANIZATION RATING														
60+	(44)		1	1	1	5		3	3	3	2	3	8		3	5	1	1	2		2
56-59	(40)		1	1	1	1		7	3	7	3	3	2	4	2	3	2				
51-55	(21)	2	1	2	1 1	1	1	1 2		1	3	1	1 2	1							
33-50	(10)		2		1	1	1	1		2		1	1								
							THOUGHT RATING														
60+	(44)				2		5	3	5	3	3	2	8	2	5	1	1	1	1		2
56-59	(40)				3	2	5	4	4	3	4	3	5	3	4						
51-55	(21)	1			1 3	1	2	1	1 2	1 2	1		1 2		1		1				
33-50	(10)		1	1		1 1	1 1			1		1	1	1							
							STYLE RATING														
60+	(44)			1			5	3	3	3	4	7	2	5	3	3	2	1	1	1	
56-59	(40)		1		2	1	1	4	4	2	5	8	5	2	2	2	1				
51-55	(21)	1	1	1		1 1	2		1 4	1 2	2	1		1	1	1					
33-50	(10)	1	1	1	1		1	2		1	1		1								
							OVERALL RATING														
60+	(44)		2		1	2	1	4	3	2		6	9	3		4	1	2	1	3	
56-59	(40)		2	2	1		2	1	3	4	4	4	8	5	3	1					
51-55	(21)	1	1	2	2		2 2	1		3	2	2	1		2						
33-50	(10)	1	2			1	1	1	1	1	1	1									

* Scores of students who have English as a second language are underlined.

students on the ETS Student Description Questionnaire) also are shown in Table 10. These correlations all are modest but statistically significant ($p<.10$ or better). Strongest relationship is between style and grades. We also looked at correlations with the frequency that freshmer report writing essays in secondary school, but these relationships are not significant.

Freshman English grades and pre-college tests. Correlations between the 4 pre-college test scores and overall English grades (fall, spring, and year) and fall and spring grades in 3 major Freshman English courses (English 15, English 25, and English 29) are given in Table 12. The correlations with overall grades are low, although many of the relationships are statistically significant ($p<.10$ or better). TSWE appears to correlate slightly better than SAT-V or Eng Comp with English grades.

Table 12

Correlations between
English Grades and Pre-College Scores

	TSWE		Eng Comp		SAT-V		SAT-M	
	r	(n)	r	(n)	r	(n)	r	(n)
Overall English Course Grades								
Fall	.23*	(61)	.11	(87)	.09	(87)	-.19*	(87)
Spring	.17[a]	(62)	.08	(87)	.17[a]	(88)	-.07	(88)
Year	.28*	(68)	.18*	(98)	.22*	(99)	-.09	(99)
English 15								
Fall	.33*	(26)	.11	(31)	.18	(31)	-.20	(31)
Spring	.27[a]	(25)	.02	(30)	.33*	(30)	.00	(30)
English 25								
Fall	.20	(14)	.13	(24)	-.13	(24)	-.23	(24)
Spring	-.26	(13)	-.13	(22)	.00	(22)	-.02	(22)
English 29								
Fall	.44*	(18)	.40*	(27)	.49**	(27)	-.22	(27)
Spring	.52*	(18)	.32[a]	(26)	.51**	(26)	-.10	(26)

a = $p<.10$ * = $p<.05$ ** = $p<.01$ *** = $p<.001$

We looked separately at grades for students in the 3 major courses; and although the number of study participants in each course is fairly small, the results are intriguing. For freshmen in English 15, both semesters' grades are related to TSWE (r = .33, .27) and SAT-V (r = .18, .33).

Considerably higher correlations are present between English 29 and TSWE (r = .44, .52), SAT-V (r = .49, .51), and Eng Comp (r = .40, .32). English 25 grades do not correlate well with any of the pre-college tests and, in fact, show several negative relationships. SAT-M correlates negatively with almost all of the overall and course grades, but at a statistically non-significant level.

Table 13 describes relationships between TSWE and grades in another way. It illustrates that even some of the students in the lowest Yale TSWE range received B's in freshman English courses and that 6 of the 13 students in the 51-55 range earned "A" or "A-/B+."

Table 13

Tally of Year's Freshman English Grades for Four TSWE Levels

	Year's English Grade Average							
TSWE Level	A	A-/B+	B	B-/C+	C	C-/D+	D	F
60+	3	5	12	3	1			
56-59	8	5	8	1	1		1	
51-55	5	1	2	1	4			
33-50			2	1	3			1

Comparisons with ETS findings. The ETS preliminary study of the TSWE concluded that "the correlational relationship between TSWE and the outcome variables is as high or higher than those for the other antecedent variables in most [of their 12] participating institutions" (Breland, Conlon, &

Rogosa, 1976, p. 56). They found correlations between freshman English grades and TSWE ranging from .22 to .63 with a median of .33. Yale's comparable correlation is .28 for the year's English grades, with individual semester courses ranging from -.26 to .52. Five of the 12 ETS colleges had available SAT-V scores. For these schools, SAT-V correlation with grades ranged from .24 to .44, median of .32. The Yale study correlation is .22.

4. Are there differences in essay ratings and in grades in English courses between men and women in our sample group?

Only the subsentence mechanics rating is significantly different for the essays of women (3.10) and men (2.86). No other statistically significant differences are found between the sexes for the other essay categories or for English course grades. We did find that men in the low SAT-V level were much less willing or able to participate in our study although their slightly smaller number does not affect our statistical analyses.

5. How frequently have freshmen written essays in secondary school compared to their first year in college? Does the frequency of their writing relate to essay ratings or English grades?

Students participating in the study were asked to answer a few questions before beginning to write. The questions and tallies of student responses are given in Table 15. Only questionnaires from those 173 students whose essays were rated are included.

Essay writing frequency. In general, students report writing "formal essays" more frequently during their last year of secondary school than during freshman yeat at Yale, although the differences are not statistically significant. Forty-two percent of the students say they wrote more essays in secondary school, 31% report the same frequencies for both years, and

27% indicate a higher number of college essays. Whereas 71% report writing weekly or twice a month in secondary school, 60% write this frequently in freshman year. Of course, these figures are based on personal recollections rather than on objective counts.

Writing frequency, essay ratings, and English grades. Students who write more frequently in secondary school tend to receive higher English grades in the first semester of their freshman year than those with less writing experience. These modest correlations are reported in Table 14. Statistically significant relationships are found between the frequency of freshman year writing and spring English grades in English 25 and 29, but not with other grades.

Table 14

Correlations among Frequency of Essay Writing, Essay Ratings, and English Grades

	Frequency of Writing in Last Year of Secondary School		Frequency of Writing in First Year of College	
	r	(n)	r	(n)
Overall English Course Grades				
Fall	.29**	(87)	.08	(87)
Spring	.00	(88)	.10	(87)
Year	.13[a]	(99)	.00	(98)
English 15				
Fall	.34*	(31)	-.03	(31)
Spring	-.08	(30)	-.14	(30)
English 25				
Fall	.23	(24)	.25	(24)
Spring	-.18	(22)	.45[a]	(22)
English 29				
Fall	.29[a]	(27)	.18	(27)
Spring	.21	(26)	.33[a]	(25)
Essay Ratings				
Subsentence	.02	(172)	.10[a]	(172)
Sentence	.01	(172)	.13*	(172)
Organization	.03	(172)	.01	(172)
Thought	.00	(172)	.02	(172)
Style	-.02	(172)	.10[a]	(172)
Overall	.08	(172)	.12[a]	(172)

a = $p \leq .10$, * = $p \leq .05$, ** = $p \leq .01$

None of the essay ratings correlate significantly with frequency of secondary school writing. However, modest relationships do occur between freshman year frequency and four of the categories--subsentence mechanics, sentence mechanics, style, and overall rating.

6. What courses do students find most helpful for improving their writing? Do they believe that other students would use a writing consultant? Would they use one?

With only half of the students in our sample enrolled in a freshman English course, the indication by 74 that English was one of the courses most helpful means that about 80% of those with English felt that English improved their writing. A wide variety of other disciplines also are considered helpful for writing improvement, with history, French, and philosophy mentioned most frequently.

Eighty percent of the sampled freshmen believe that students would use writing consultants if they were available, and 64% indicate they might use such a service themselves.

7. What kinds of English courses do this year's freshmen plan to take next year? Of those who have had no English course freshman year, how many expect to take such a course next year?

Over two-thirds of the students in our sample say they plan to take an English course next year. These plans are similar for those with freshman English (72.5%) and those without English (67.9%). If these students go ahead with their plans, we can project that the number of Yale students in the Class of 1979 without an English course would drop from 227 first semester freshman year to 73 in sophomore year.

Table 15

Tally of Student Questionnaire Responses

Questions	Answers	N	%
1. During your last year of secondary school, about how often were you required to write formal essays?	Weekly (or more often)	48	27.7
	Twice a Month	75	43.4
	Monthly	30	17.3
	2 or 3 Times a Year	15	8.7
	Never	4	2.3
	No Response	1	0.6
2. During your freshman year at Yale, about how often have you been required to write formal essays?	Weekly (or more often)	38	22.0
	Twice a Month	65	37.6
	Monthly	38	22.0
	2 or 3 Times a Year	27	15.6
	Never	4	2.3
	No Response	1	0.6
3. What English Course(s) have you taken at Yale?	(These are not tallied here as we took this information from the Yale Record Cards)		
4. What course(s) at Yale have helped you most with writing?	No Course Listed	52	30.0
	1 Course Listed	78	45.0
	2 Courses Listed	36	21.0
	3 Courses Listed	7	4.0
	Total Number Responses	173	100.0

Disciplines Listed:

English 15	22	Philosophy	12
English 25	20	History of Art	9
English 29	21	Psychology	6
Other English	10	Political Science	4
Literature	1	Economics	5
Total Lit & English	74	Sociology	3
		Other--one mention	5
History & Ancient Civ	32	Spanish	3
French	18	Total No. Courses	171

5. What, if any, kind of English course do you plan to take next year? 67.9% of the students who did not take a freshman Eng. course plan a course next year. 72.6% of current students plan a sophomore course.	None	49	29.7
	Writing	29	17.6
	Literature	65	39.4
	Both Writing & Literature	22	13.3
	Total Number Responses	165	100.0
6. During the Summer Term, writing consultants are availab e, to whom students may go for help with planning, writing, and rewriting papers. If this service were available during the regular year, do you think students would use it?	No	2	1.2
	Probably Not	33	19.2
	Probably Yes	85	49.4
	Yes	52	30.2
	Total Number Responses	172	100.0
	Average Response = 3.09		
7. Do you think <u>you</u> might use a consultant?	No	21	12.1
	Probably Not	41	23.7
	Probably Yes	68	39.3
	Yes	43	24.9
	Total Number Responses	173	100.0
	Average Response = 2.77		

II. Questions Related to Educational Policy.

1. Are complaints about the quality of student writing at Yale justified? What are the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing?

Insofar as complaints about students' writing are directed against "incorrectness" of grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and rudimentary organization, they are for the most part not justified. We make allowance here for the fact that our selected freshmen had no chance to look up words or to revise their work; many of the merely careless errors would probably disappear from more finished copy. Even in these hasty drafts, only 20 % of the students scored a total of 4 or less on subsentence and sentence level raw scores combined.

The readers' complaints were not so much against mechanical incorrectness as, in general, against dull prose and uniform, unskeptical habits of thinking. Students fail to question ambiguities, ironies, and evaluative implications; they dilute their prose with colorless latinate diction and weigh it down with compound constructions; they are often so locked into a standard method of essay-writing that they fail to see possible alternative approaches. No one, for instance, saw that topic B undercuts itself; only a handful could sort out the jumbled assumptions of topic D; all but two who chose topic E seemed deaf to its sarcasm.

2. What proportion of freshmen seem likely to profit from a basic composition course? Do these students always or often elect an English course in freshman year?

If we assume that a total in raw ratings of 4 or less for the first two categories combined indicates that a student needs a basic course in composition, then about 20% of Yale freshmen probably need such a course. Of the 35 in our sample with these low scores, 15 had elected an English

course; but in 1975-76 no basic composition course was offered in Yale College.

3. What are the most accurate and efficient ways to identify students who need a basic composition course when they enter college? Can the Yale English department rely on standardized tests for placement or should it also administer an essay test of its own?

Though students who scored low on standardized tests nearly always wrote poor essays, the converse--that high scorers wrote good essays--is not true. (Princeton, which uses an essay for placement, reports the same discrepancy.) But for Yale to give its own essay test, with the consumption of time and money such a test would require, does not seem to us efficient. Low scorers should be advised to enroll in the newly-established English 10, with the understanding that a student competent in compositional mechanics would be encouraged to "write his way up" to a higher-level course in the first few weeks of term. Other poor writers should be spotted by alert instructors in all departments, and advised to enroll in English 10 (a or b).

4. Should freshmen be required to take an English course? A writing course?

The modest scope of our study does not enable us to say whether the writing of students who chose to take an English course improved during the year. Yale College might do well to make such a study. Our present data, however, would not support the re-institution of the English requirement abandoned in 1967. What it does suggest, we believe, are two needs: first, there should be some sure way of identifying poor writers and of bringing them together with appropriate instruction. (We should at least lead the horse to water.) Second, we should demand of all students a more acutely critical attention to logic and language. There is no reason to think that English courses make this demand most effectively for all students.

A writing requirement (its form to be specified by the Yale College faculty) seems in order; an English requirement does not. If there were such a requirement, it could also be a mechanism for identifying and helping the poorer writers.

5. Could our experience in developing ways to evaluate the essays provide useful techniques for training new teachers? For improving the teaching of writing?

An unexpected result has given us food for thought. Grades in English 29 (see Appendix E) correlate better with our readers' judgments than do grades in English 15 or 25--so much better that we asked whether there was something about English 29 that made it more like our study; and something that made it (and, possibly, the study) unlike the other two courses. One similarity, we think, may be in the kinds of essay topics English 29 often uses. Since most of the literature in this course is read in translation, essay topics often are general questions of themes and values--topics of broadly the same type as those used in the study. Students who wrote well for English 29 might therefore be expected to write well in the study.

English 29 is unlike the other two courses in the way it is taught. Not only is its syllabus uniform (as is English 25's), but its weekly lectures necessitate frequent, active staff meetings. These result in a social solidarity not present in the same degree among faculty teaching the more dispersed sections of 15 and 25; they may also, we believe, result in a greater agreement about standards for judging student papers. If that is true, English 29 staff meetings would thus far resemble the readers' conferences that were part of the study: situations in which evaluators learn from and adjust to one another.

English 29 students do not write better, according to the study, than students in English 25; but the standards of judgment for English 29 appear to be similar, and fairly consistent. We are far from advocating lock-step uniformity, but we do think that relative constancy in evaluation from one reader to the next is reassuring for students and teachers alike. And it seems that getting evaluators together helps to produce such constancy.

Our five readers were never fully at one on the definitions of our third and fourth categories, nor on the relative importance of this or that category for overall ratings--so much, the inter- and intra-reader correlations show. We did find, though, that dividing up "the writing problem" was helpful when we began discussing how we might teach these freshmen to write better. Global judgment produces final marks, but differentiated judgment produces teaching methods. Every reader had a different idea of where to begin--with logical thinking, with perception of ambiguities, with sensitivity to metaphor, with diction, with awareness of one's audience and/or of one's own voice, and so on. But we all saw most hope in a divide-and-conquer approach.

The direct and often dreary experience of reading the essays was the sine qua non of our shared planning. Because of that experience we saw more clearly what students' real strengths and weaknesses were apt to be, and we were better able than before to plan a sequence of pedagogic actions. Had we been an actual teaching cadre, our plans and experience, our struggles over defining criteria, and our growing respect for our diversity would surely have stood us in good stead. Our next step would probably have been to consult textbooks, manuals, bibliographies, and articles for other teachers' ideas about how to do what we had come to see as most important, and to do it effectively and imaginatively.

Only two of the five readers were in fact planning to teach freshman English the following semester. But all five, in the final conference, reported having felt, over and over, as they read the essays, "If only I could sit down with this kid, and work over these things with him. . . ." That the routine, even the drudgery, of our reading could result, not in despair over how bad the students' writing was, but in active interest and hope, suggests that some appropriate modification of our group's process might be a good way to begin training new teachers of writing. At the same time, our diversity suggests that for all section teachers in a freshman course to try to use a single mode and sequence of instruction would probably not be wise. The individual teacher's interests and emphases should help shape his methods. And he comes to define those interests in the process of discussion with others who share his duties and concerns.

Appendix A

List of Variables Collected
for Participants in the Study

VARIABLES	DESCRIPTION
Selection Variables	
English Course in Freshman Year?	Yes, No
SAT-V Level	Low=Under 640, Middle=640-690, High=Over 690
Sex	Men, Women
Essay Ratings	
Subsentence Level Mechanics	Average rating based on standardized scores from 2 to 5 readers.
Sentence Level Mechanics	
Organization	
Thought	
Style	
Overall Rating	
Student Questionnaire from Essay Session	
Frequency of Essays in Last Year of Secondary School	5=Weekly, 4=Twice a Month, 3=Monthly, 2=2 or 3 Times a Year, 1=Never
Frequency of Essays in Freshman Year	"
Courses at Yale that have Helped Most with Writing	
Plans for English Courses Next Year	None, Writing, Literature, Both
Would Students Use Writing Consultants	No, Probably Not, Probably Yes, Yes
Would You Use Writing Consultants	"
Freshman Year Grades	
Grade Point Averages for:	
Division I (Humanities-Languages)	Fall, Spring, Total Year
Division II(Humanities-Other)	Fall, Spring, Total Year
Division III(Social Sciences)	Fall, Spring, Total Year
Division IV(Natural Sciences)	Fall, Spring, Total Year
Total Grade Point Average	Fall, Spring, Total Year
English Course Grades for:	
English 15	Fall, Spring, Total Year
English 25	Fall, Spring, Total Year
English 29	Fall, Spring, Total Year
Other Courses	Fall, Spring, Total Year
Total Grade Point Average	Fall, Spring, Total Year
Pre-College Admissions Information	
Scholastic Aptitude Test-Verbal	
Scholastic Aptitude Test-Math	
Test of Standard Written English	
Achievement Tests--English Composition and Others	
Admissions Staff Ratings	
Alumni Schools Committee Rating	
Expected Major	

Pre-College Information from ETS Student Description Questionnaire

Type of High School	Public, Private
High School Program	Academic, General, Career-Oriented, Other
Class Size	100,100-249,250-499,500-749,750 or More
Class Rank	Top Tenth,Second Tenth, Fifths
High School Grades-- English, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, Social Studies	A through F, Pass
High School Average	0 through 4.0
Expected Years of High School English	0,1,2,3,4,Over 4
Advanced Placement-- English, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Sciences, History	Yes, blank
Participation in-- Community & Church Groups, Athletics, School Organizations	Differs for the 3 Areas
Scholastic Honors and Awards	0,1-2,3-4,5-6,7+
Educational Objective	2-Year,BA/BS,MA/MS,PhD/MD, Other or Undecided
English Best Language	No, Maybe, Yes
Assistance Needed in College-- Reading, Study Habits, Writing	Yes, blank
Extracurricular Activities Past & Future--Journalism/Debate/Drama	High School & College, High School Not College, College Not High School, blank
Self-Rating--Creative Writing, Spoken Expression, Written Expression	Top 1 Percent, Top 10 Percent, Above Average, Average, Below Average
Honors Courses--English	Yes, blank
Field of Study in College--First Choice, Second Choice	Number Code from pages 5-6 of ATP Magnetic Tape Layout

Appendix B
Invitation Letter

Dear ,

The Yale College Deans, the English Department, and the Office of Institutional Research request your participation in a project concerning undergraduates and the written language. The project will take an hour of your time (see schedule); you will be asked to:

--write for 40 minutes on your choice of what we hope will be interesting, controversial topics;
--answer some questions about what writing instruction you think Yale should offer, to help guide us in the use of present resources and in the development of new ones.

For the sake of economy and efficiency, we are asking only a representative sample of this year's freshmen to help in the project. You were not chosen at random; therefore your personal participation is extremely important.

The group of which you are a part was chosen as follows: seventy-five men and seventy-five women in each of two categories, namely, those who have and those who have not taken an English course during freshman year. The only other dimension considered is scores on the Verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test: each group of seventy-five is statistically representative, in this respect. The sample is small, so every individual in it matters.

The questions we hope to answer are 1) How do readers judge the quality of an essay? On what dimensions do they agree--and disagree? 2) What, if any, relation is there between the agreed-on quality of essays and students' sex, test scores, and choice of whether or not to take a Yale English course? 3) Are the grand generalizations and cranky complaints that we all hear about student writing based on fact? What <u>are</u> the facts, anyway? 4) What kind(s) of writing courses and/or other forms of writing instruction should Yale be offering its undergraduates? How many students are likely to want or need which kind of resource?

You will be helping many--literally, thousands--of present and future Yale students, by giving a basis on which to plan new courses and programs. As an individual, your privacy will be scrupulously respected: no one outside the research team will be told anything about your individual performance--no one, that is, except you; and even you must come and ask.

For your convenience two writing sessions are scheduled, both to meet in WLH 201 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. One will be on Sunday evening, April 11; the other on Monday, April 12. Please let your College Dean know which session you will attend. If neither time is possible for you, let your Dean know <u>that</u>, so that we can, if necessary, schedule a further "make-up" session.

It isn't often that any of us can boast of being indispensable; but you are, on April 11 or 12. We look forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely yours,

Martin Griffin
Associate Dean,
Yale College

John Hoskins
Director, Office of
Institutional Research

Paula Johnson
Director of Undergraduate
Studies, English

Appendix C

English Essay Study
Spring, 1976

READERS' GUIDELINES

I. General Orientation to the Study:

This study examines the essay writing skills of Yale freshmen in their second semester. The essays that you are reading were written by a sample of Yale students in a 40-minute session. These students were selected to evenly represent (a) men and women, (b) those students who did and did not take a fall English course, and (c) students in the low, middle and high thirds of their class on SAT-Verbal scores.

The essays that you will read are "exact" typewritten copies of the students' essays and include any spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors that the students may have made. You will read a total of 116 or 117 essays (including 12 that are repeated).

II. Rating the Essays:

Before Rating: Each time that you sit down to work, try to put yourself in a "reading mood." Be certain that the meaning of the 6 rating categories is clear. Re-read the category definitions and then read over a few essays. Notice how the categories apply and re-establish your frame of reference. As it takes a while to "warm up," try to work at least one hour or longer at each reading session.

Category Definitions and Recording Sheet: You have been provided with definitions of the 6 categories and a sheet for recording your ratings. The essays are arranged in the order that we want you to rate them. Please indicate the order (from 1 through 116 or 117) in the first column and then write the essay number (from the upper righthand corner of the essay) in the second comumn. Category ratings will follow in the next six columns (ratings of 1-5 for categories). The rating levels of 1 through 5 are based on the frame of reference of these essays, where:

1 = one of the worst of these essays
2 = worse than average for these essays
3 = average for these essays
4 = better than average for these essays
5 = one of the best of these essays.

Column nine will be for indicating the topic of essay (A, B, C, D, and E).

During Rating: After reading a few essays to establish your frame of reference, begin rating. Take one essay and read it carefully. Record the order number and essay number, and then make your decisions on the first five categories. Remember to determine your overall essay evaluation after the separate categories are rated and recorded. In general, try to move consecutively through the essays as they are arranged in your packet. However, if you are certain that you should revise an earlier rating, it is alright to return to an earlier essay. One exception: do not go back and alter the 12 essays that appear two times after your second reading of them.

Other Suggestions: Be careful not to let your ratings "halo." That is, do not let one rating of an essay unconsciously affect your rating of that essay on other categories. Rate each essay only on its own merits in comparison with the other essays on the category under consideration.

Your frame of reference is the set of essays in your packet. They should be compared with each other, not with other student essays that you have read nor with your "ideal" of good college writing.

Try to make no assumptions about the person who wrote an essay. Rate on the basis of what was written.

Try to spread your ratings across the 1-5 range for each category although we do not expect to have even amounts of ratings for each level.

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Essay Writing Instructions:

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING "TOPICS" TO WRITE ABOUT. YOU MAY AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT, OR YOU MAY DISAGREE; IN EITHER CASE, MAKE THE BEST ARGUMENT YOU CAN FOR THE POSITION YOU TAKE.

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Here's another lesson in hypocrisy: the Jews keep reminding us of the Nazi holocaust, to get themselves international sympathy--while they practice their own atrocities against the Palestinians.

A woman isn't really liberated unless she can take sex casually and naturally, without asking whether it's "meaningful" any more than she asks whether it's legal.

Everybody blames TV for something--from the crime rate to why Johnny can't read. But in fact television deals seriously with serious issues. And many of the weekday shows are really good, by any cultural standards you want to apply.

A Marxist, proposing a seminar on a Black leader? No wonder the Yale history department refused to appoint Herbert Aptheker!

The corruption and sensationalism of professional sports in America have made athletics look so bad that now it's almost a disgrace to play a sport well.